

FAMOUS 1950s EC COMICS!



NO. 12
JUNE

SHOCK



200
27¢
CANADA



SUSPENSTORIES



JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 TRADITION!

Illustrated

DEADLINE

YOU STAND AND YOU LISTEN TO THE DRUM OF CRATTERING TYPEWRITERS AND VOICES SCREAMING INTO TELEPHONES AND THE THUNDER OF THE PRESSER ABOVE. YOU LISTEN TO THE FRANTIC UPSURGE OF THE HUMBERTY AND THE MADNESS THAT CONSTITUTE A BURT NEWSPAPER OFFICE. THE SOUND IS MUSIC TO YOUR EARS, LAWRENCE BREIT. THE SMELL OF INK AND SWEAT AND STALE CIGARETTE SMOKE IS PERFUME. YOU STAND WITH YOUR HAT IN YOUR HAND AND YOUR HEAD BOWED AND YOU INHALE THAT PERFUME AND YOU LISTEN TO THAT MUSIC. YOU STAND BEFORE THE DESK OF PAUL MARSH... MANAGING EDITOR OF "THE SLOAN" AND "THE GRAY"...

JUST GIVE ME ONE MORE CHANCE, PHIL! ALL I NEED IS A BREAK! I'VE REFORMED! I SWEAR IT! WASN'T I THE BEST BARN REPORTER YOU EVER HAD? DIDN'T I BRING IN THAT CITY HALL STUFF? DIDN'T I BUST OVER THE MILLER MOB... DIDN'T I...

A LOT OF BARN'S PASSED OVER THE BAR SINCE FRODO LARRY!

YOU'RE LARRY BREE. YOU'RE SLOPPY AND UNSHAVEN AND YOUR LAST HUNDRED DOLLAR BAIT HANGS LIKE AN OLD BURFLAP BACK ON YOUR SHAKING SHOULDER... PHIL'S CRACK OUTS BEEP...

THAT WASN'T ANGE, PHIL!

LISTEN, LARRY. THERE ISN'T ANOTHER PAPER IN TOWN'LL FORGIVE YOU. WHY SHOULD I GIVE YOU A BREAK YOU'LL TAKE YOUR FIRST WEEK'S PAY AND GO SET YOURSELF TANKED UP.



I'M NOT LIKE THAT ANY MORE, PHIL! I STOP DRINKING! I HAVEN'T TOUCHED A DROPP FOR A WEEK! I TOLD YOU! I'VE REFORMED! ALL I WANT IS A CHANCE... A CHANCE TO GET ON MY FEET AGAIN. I'VE FIXED EVERY PAPER IN TOWN. I WAS TOO PROUD TO COME BACK HERE. BUT NOW...

WHAT'S THE FITCH, LARRY? WHY THE SUDDEN CHANGE? MEET A GALS?



YOU STUFFER. YOU THINK OF ANNIE. MYSTERIOUS, LUSHEROUS, DESIRABLE ANNIE...

HOW... DID YOU KNOW, PHIL?

WHAT ELSE?



YOU THINK OF ANNIE COMING INTO THAT BAR LAST WEEK AND SLIPPING UP ONTO THE STOOL BESIDE YOU...

HIT YOU LOOK LONESOME? NEED IF I JOIN YOU?

WOULD YOU TALKIN' TIME?



GLORIOUS, BEAUTIFUL ANNIE. YOU THINK OF THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT WITH HER WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR LYING...

YOU'RE A **NICE GUY**, LARRY. I **LIKE** YOU. **SIMON**, LET'S GET OUT OF THIS JOINT! I'VE GOT A **CAR** OUTSIDE...

SURE, SURE...



... THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT, DRIVING OUT OF THE CITY... THE ROAD, STRETCHING INTO THE DARKNESS...

LET'S NOT ASK ANY **QUESTIONING** ABOUT EACH OTHER, LARRY. NO **LAST NAMES**. NO **PHONE NUMBERS**. LET'S **JUST ENJOY** FOREVER... WITH NO **YESTERDAY** AND NO **TOMORROW**...

THANKS, ANNIE! I'M GLAD YOU **UNDERSTAND!**



... THE EXCITEMENT THAT RIPPLED THROUGH YOUR BODY AND MADE YOUR HEART BEAT FASTER AND YOUR BLOOD RUN HOT AS SHE SWUNG HER CAR INTO THE PARKING LOT...



YOU THINK OF THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT WITH ANNIE... AND THE MORNING AFTER, WAKING AND FINDING THE CARN EMPTY... ANNIE GONE... AND THE **NOTE**...

LARRY, DARLING,

MEET ME NEXT TUESDAY SAME PLACE. SAME TIME.

I LOVE YOU, ANNIE



SO YOU STAND BEFORE PHIL WAGON, BEGGING FOR A JOB. BEGGING FOR A CHANCE AT RESPECTABILITY ONCE AGAIN...

WELL, IT'S **TRUE**, PHIL! I **DID** MEET A **GIRL**. AND I'M **IN LOVE** WITH HER. I **NEED** A **JOB**, PHIL. I **NEED** **DOLLARS**! I'M GOING TO **SEE** HER AGAIN AND I'M... I'M **AFRAID**. I WANT TO GET SOME **CLOTHES**... A **NICE** GIFT FOR HER. A...

LOOK, LARRY! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I'LL **DO**...



PHIL LOOKS UP AT YOU GRIMLY...

YOU GO OUT AND SHOW ME YOU'RE STILL A GOOD REPORTER AND I'LL PUT YOU ON THE PAYROLL. YOU COME IN WITH A SCOOP, A FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE... AND YOU'RE IN. FAIR ENOUGH?

THANKS, PHIL! THANKS A LOT!

PHIL HOLDS UP HIS HAND...

NOTHING DOING, LARRY! NO TOUCH! NOT A DIME TILL YOU PRODUCE. NOW, SCRAM... I'M BUSY!

SURE, PHIL! SURE!

YOU CLOSE THE DOOR TO THE MANAGING EDITORS' OFFICE AND YOU STRIDE THROUGH THE CITY ROOM...

WELL, IF IT AIN'T LARRY BRIDE, ONE-TIME ACE REPORTER... NOW LEADING CANDIDATE FOR ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS!

HELLO, STAN! GOT THE BRIDGE AND THE GOVT SPONOR... AND I'M COMIN' BACK TO WORK!

POO. COMIN' BACK HERE? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

PHIL'S COMIN' TO GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE, STAN! IF I COME IN WITH A FAKE, HE'LL PUT ME ON SO-CALLED STAFF! LET ME HEAR! I'M IN A HURRY!

STAN LAUGHS AFTER YOU, HIS VOICE PILING ABOVE THE UPROAR...

WHY DON'T YOU DO A SPREAD ON HOW A GUY SLIDES FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM ON A BOTTLE OF TOOTSIE, LARRY...

HIS VOICE... HIGH-PITCHED... IRRESISTIBLE... MAKING YOU CLENCH YOUR FISTS...

THE ONLY THING YOU'LL COME IN WITH WILL BE ONE WRAPPER OF A RANOVER...

YOU SLAM THE DOOR TO THE CITY ROOM AND YOU STAND IN THE SILENCE OF THE HALL... AND YOU BITE YOUR TEETH...

NO! NO!
I CAN DO IT!
I CAN...

AND SUDDENLY YOU THINK OF ANNE... BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ANNE... AND YOU KNOW YOU CAN DO IT... YOU STRAIGHTEN UP... AND YOU BRING DOWN THE HALL AND OUT INTO THE STREET...



THE MORNING SUN IS WARM UPON YOUR FACE... THE TRAFFIC MOVES DINK AROUND YOU... YOU BEGIN TO WALK...



THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, LARRY. TODAY. TOMORROW IS TUESDAY. TOMORROW NIGHT YOU MEET ANNE AGAIN. YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT... TODAY...



BY AFTERNOON, PANIC HAS TAKEN HOLD OF YOU. YOU'VE WALKED ALL DAY AND YOU HAVEN'T COME ACROSS ANYTHING. NOT ONE LEAD! BY EVENING, YOUR STOMACH IS A TIGHT NERVOUS KNOT.

... I NEED A DRINK ...



NO, LARRY. NO! THAT'S NOT THE ANSWER. KEEP WALKING! YOU'LL FIND SOMETHING. YOU'LL GET THAT STORY. KEEP WALKING...

A CUP OF COFFEE. THAT'S WHAT I NEED!



YOU SWING INTO THE ALL-NIGHT DINER AND SLIDE ONTO A STOOL... THE PLACE IS EMPTY. THERE'S NO ONE BEHIND THE COUNTER. YOU'RE READY TO CALL FOR SERVICE WHEN YOU HEAR THE ANGRY VOICES COMING FROM THE KITCHEN...

I SAID YOU'VE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, YOU... YOU...

I'LL DO AS I PLEASE, YOU FAT SLOP!



YOU LISTEN AS THE MAN AND WOMAN IN THE APARTMENT BEHIND THE DINER ARGUE... AND THEN YOU HEAR THE QUICK MOVEMENTS... THE FURNITURE OVERTURN... SOMETHING CRASH... AND THE BLOOD-CURLING SCREAM...

NO! NO! YAAAE... OH... WHAT THE...



YOU SWING OFF THE STOOL AND DASH AROUND THE COUNTER TO THE DOOR...



YOU TUG AT THE KNOB... FOUND AT THE DOOR... BEYOND, A BODY SLUMPS TO THE FLOOR... FOOTSTEPS APPROACH. A KEY TINKERS... THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN...



YOU PEER INTO THE DIRTY APARTMENT BEYOND THE DOOR... AT THE UPHELD TABLE, THE SMASHED LAMP... THE WOMAN LYING QUIET AND STILL AMID THE RUBBLE...



YOU TURN TO THE HEAVY BOLDING MAN IN THE GREASE-STAINED APRON WHO SITS NOW UPON ONE OF THE COUNTER STOOLS WITH HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS, CRYING LIKE A BABY...



YOU SNATCH A PAPER NAPKIN AND A PENCIL FROM THE SHELF BEHIND THE COUNTER, YOU SCRIBBLE DOWN NOTES AS THE MURDERER LOOSENS HIS WORDS...



SHE CAME TO WORK FOR ME... AS A WAITRESS HERE...
TWO YEARS AGO. SHE USED TO FLIRT WITH EVERY
GUY THAT CAME IN. SHE WENT OFF WITH THEM...
DANCING... DRINKING... YOU KNOW. SHE WAS JUST
S.A.D. BUT... SOB... I... I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER...



I ASKED HER TO MARRY ME. I WANTED TO SAVE HER FROM HERSELF. I WANTED TO GIVE HER A NEW LIFE...

MARRY YOU, MINE? DON'T BE HYPOCRITICAL!

YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY. YOU CAN TAKE IT EASY. WE'LL FIX UP THE PLACE BACK THERE...



I PROMISED HER THE WORLD. YOU CAN BUY NEW FURNITURE. NEW CLOTHES. WE... WE COULD HAVE... KIDS?

NOT ARE, MIKE? I WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE. I DON'T WANT TO BE FIED DOWN WITH KIDS



ALL RIGHT, HONEY? NO KIDS THEN. WHATEVER YOU SAY! I LOVE YOU. MARRY ME!

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT. MINE? I'LL THINK ABOUT IT?



I KEPT AFTER HER. I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER. AND FINALLY...

OHAY, MINE. I'LL MARRY YOU!

YOU WON'T REGRET IT, HONEY. YOU'LL SEE.



NO, SHE DIDN'T REGRET IT. NOT HER. I WAS HER HEAD-TICKET... AND BANKROLL. AND SHE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF IT...

WHAT'S THAT, BARRY?

CLOTHES, MIKE. A WHOLE NEW WARDROBE YOU SAID I COULD BUY CLOTHES...



BUT THEN SHE STARTED GOING OUT AT NIGHT. THREE THREE TIMES A WEEK. SHE WAS UP TO HER OLD TRICKS AGAIN...

PLEASE, HONEY. STAY HOME TONIGHT. DON'T GO OUT AGAIN. STAY HOME WITH ME.

IN THIS RAT TRAP? NOT ME, BUSTER. I WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN.



SHE WAS NO GOOD. SHE SPENT ALL MY MONEY ON CLOTHES, A CAR, GOOD TIMES. SHE RAN AROUND WITH PLENTY OF MEN...

IT'S FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. WHERE WERE YOU ALL NIGHT?

SOME OF YOUR BUSINESS.



FINALLY I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. I HAD HER FOLLOWED. THE PRIVATE COP I HIRED GAVE ME A REPORT...

SHE PICKED UP SOME GUY AT A GARDEN PALACE AND— WELL, YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT HER.



SO TONIGHT, WHEN SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING OUT AGAIN, I TRIED TO STOP HER...

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, YOU— TELL ME PLEASE YOU SAID STOP



I... I COULDN'T HELP IT I GRABBED HER BY THE THROAT AND SQUEEZED...

NO! NO! NO! YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE ANYMORE



SO NOW YOU'VE GOT YOUR STORY, LARRY. RIGHT FROM THE MURDERER'S MOUTH, IT'S FRONT-PAGE MATERIAL, LARRY. IT MEANS A JOB, IT MEANS...



BOY A PHONE, MISTER?

IN THERE! IN THE BAG...

YOU GO INTO THE SHARED BACK APARTMENT AND CLOSE THE DOOR. YOU STEP OVER THE STILL BODY OF THE MURDERED WOMAN AND YOU PICK UP THE PHONE...

HELLO? CITY BERRY GIVE ME PHIL MASON? HELLO, HASN'T I GOT MY SCOFFER SWITCH ON REWRITE AND LISTEN TO THIS...



YOU DISTASTE IT... THE WHOLE THING WITH ALL THE BONY DETAILS. IT'S JUST LIKE OLD TIMES AGAIN, LARRY JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.

... AND NOW, I'M GOING TO PUT IN A CALL FOR THE COPS. THAT'S IT? BOY IT?



BOY IT, LARRY, YOU OLD SON-OF-A-BUNNY! WHAT A GREAT YARN! COME ON IN AND PICK UP YOUR FIRST BEEZ'S PAY.

YOU PUT DOWN THE PHONE AND YOU SMILE. YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU'LL NEVER HIT THE BOTTLE AGAIN. YOU'VE FOUND YOURSELF ONCE MORE, LARRY! YOU'RE A NEW MAN. AND YOU'VE GOT A WHOLE NEW LIFE AHEAD OF YOU. WITH ANNE.



NO! NO! NO!

GA SPY!

YOU SPIN AROUND, THE FIGURE ON THE FLOOR? IT'S MOVING!...

MY GOD? SHE'S NOT DEAD?

OOOHH...SOHHH...



YOUR STORY, LARRY. IT'S GOING OUT THE WINDOW? SHE'S NOT DEAD? HE DIDN'T KILL HER? DO SOMETHING, LARRY. DO SOMETHING!

NO? I WON'T LET YOU! NO? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO RUIN EVERYTHING FOR ME? NO...

O-O...GHHH!



SQUEEZE HARD, LARRY! MAKE SURE THIS TIME, LARRY, THE DOOR IS CLOSED. NIKK WILL NEVER KNOW! MAKE SURE SHE DIES THIS TIME. SQUEEZE... FIGHTER... FIGHTER...

ALL RIGHT, LARRY. THAT'S ENOUGH. SHE'S FINISHED. GET UP. DIRT YOURSELF OFF. GO AHEAD...CALL THE COPS...

HELL? POLICE? I WANT TO REPORT A MURDER...



NOW GO BACK, LARRY, GO BACK TO THE HOPPY. LOOK AT HER. PAGE? LOOK AT IT...

ANNIE STARED UP AT YOU WITH BLIND BULGING EYES. YOU BACK AWAY GASPING, YOUR STOMACH TIGHTENING...KNOTS. YOUR MOUTH IS SUDDENLY DRY...

MY GOD?

IT... IT'S ANNIE!



I...GROG...I... I NEED A DRINK!



WELL, LARRY! YOU NEED A DRINK. YOU NEED TEAL. FINELINE...A ASSHOLE DRINK. BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU DRINK, LARRY, YOU'LL NEVER ERASE ANNIE'S BULGING EYES FROM YOUR MIND? YOU'LL ALWAYS SEE HER...EVEN INTO IMMORTALITY...EVEN TO... THE END.

THE MONKEY

I SPRAWL FACE DOWNWARD ON THE SWEAT-SOAKED IRON BED OF A DIGNAL CHEAP HOTEL ROOM, WITH MY SUITS LONG DRIFTED AND THE DRUG STINKING BILIOUS FROM MY HEAVENS, AND I TREMBLE AND SHIVER, STARTING AT EVERY SOUND THAT BOUNDS OUTSIDE MY DOOR... MY FIT LIES OPEN BESIDE ME, THE INSTRUMENTS OF MY RELIEF SPILLED OUT UPON THE DIRTY BED SHEETS... THE SPIKE, THE ROSE, THE BLADED SPOON, THE CAN OF STERNO, AND I WAIT... I WAIT WITH MY FIT FOR THE WELCOME FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS... FOR THE STAGGATE BUCKING UPON THE DOOR... FOR THE FAMILIAR FIGURE TO SAUNTER THROUGH IT WITH HIS HANDS EXTENDED, TAKING MY MONEY AND SLIPPING ME MY PRECIOUS JOLT OF 'M'. I'VE WAITED, BUT MY PUSHER HAS NOT COME...



I'VE WAITED THROUGH THE HOURS WHILE THE PER-SPARATION Poured FROM MY PORES AND MY STOMACH TIED ITSELF INTO KNOTS AND MY MUSCLES FELT LIKE RED-HOT ROSS AND THE MONKEY ON MY BACK BEGAN TO SCRATCH AND TEAR AND SCREAM UNTIL I HAD TO HOLD MY TREMBLING HANDS TIGHT OVER MY MOUTH TO SHUT THAT SADDENING MONEY UP...

AND AS I LIE HERE WITH MY BODY BAKED IN PAIN AND MY THROAT DRY AND BURNING AND MY TONGUE FUZZY IN MY MOUTH, I THINK OF HOW I FIRST BECAME A NEAD... A USER... A DOPE ADDICT...



"BOACH" IS JOVEN'... JOINT' & KEEPER... A MARIJUANA CIGARETTE. MOST 'HEADS' START WITH 'T' AND GRADUATE TO 'M' OR 'W'. HEROIN OR MORPHINE. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. I WAS GOING TO GET REAL HIGH BACK THEN...

HEY, EDDIE! C'MON ALONG. ME AND SOME OF THE GUYS ARE GOING TO BLAST A FEW OF THESE.

WHAT ARE THEY, BOY?

AN, C'MON, EDDIE. WE'RE GOING HAVE A WAGON... A BALL. SHE'LL BE THERE. I KNOW YOU LIKE SHE.

SHE'FF SHE BOMBER? SHE... SHE SMOKES 'T'S

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. SHE BONNE! SHE'S MARIJUANA. I WAS CRAZY ABOUT HER. I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN CENTRAL HIGH...

SHE'S CRAZY, EDDIE! SHE'S REAL STRAIGHT! SHE'S ON IT! SORRY YOU WON'T JOIN UP. WELL...

HOLD ON, BO.

I FIGURED IT WOULD BE A GOOD WAY TO GET FRIENDLY WITH HER, SO I WENT ALONG WITH BO. HE TOOK ME TO A DIRT CELLAR CLUB HOUSE NEAR THE SCHOOL...

SHE'LL BE HERE SOON, EDDIE. WERE? LIGHT UP ON THIS WHILE YOU'RE WAITING.

TH-THANKS, BO.

WELCOME TO THE F-FACTORY, EDDIE.

WHERE'S BO, BOY?



POP GRASS BUTTS, YOU SQUARE. DON'T YOU POP THEM STUFF YET?

MARI-JUANA??

GOOD IF YOU JERK. YOU WANT TO GET ME FROSTED? SOME MARIJ MAY BE FROSTED IN C'MON BOY' IN.

WOLFRAB. BO. I'D RATHER NOT...



THAT 'MADAM' I BLASPHEMED WHILE WAITING FOR THE BUNNEN WAS MY FIRST MARIJUANA CIGARETTE. SO SCANLON, WHO'S GIVEN IT TO ME, WRITERS TELL IT'S FINISHED. I CAN NEVER GAIN, BUT BY THAT TIME I DON'T CARE. I WAS 'IN'.

I NEVER REALIZED TILL IT WAS MUCH TOO LATE THAT SID HAD LIES TO ME ABOUT SID... THAT SHE WAS NEVER GOING... AND THAT HE'D ONLY GIVEN ME THE 'LOONY' TO GET ME STARTED. SID SCANLON WAS A 'PROSPECT'.



WANT ANOTHER ONE, SID. I'M FLIPPY.

THESE THINGS COST NOTHING, SID. LET YOU HAVE ONE FOR TWO BITS.



TWO BITS FOR ONE LOOPY BITTY.

TAKE IT ON LEAVE IT, BOBE.

I TOOK IT. I WAS 'HOOKED'. I REACHED INTO MY POCKET AND FORGED OVER WHAT HAD TO BE MY FIRST IN A LONG SERIES OF PAYMENTS FOR 'THE STUFF'.

SID NEVER HAD TO LOOK FOR ME AFTER THAT. I LOOKED FOR HIM, AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I WAS BEGGING HIM FOR...

PILLS, SID?

'WAGGERS'... 'DEVIL'S'... 'F-PILLS'... 'BOMB-DIVING'...



I'LL... TAKE IT, SID. HERE YARE.

THANKS, BOBE. I'LL BE SEEING YOU, SID.



...SOMETHING STRONGER. SID, I DON'T GET MUCH OF A 'RISE' OUT OF 'I' ANYMORE.

I CAN GET YOU SOME 'PILLS', SID.



I WAS PROMOTED. NOW I WAS A 'JEANY-HEAD'... A 'SABOTAGE-HEAD'... A 'BENZEDRINE ADDICT'.

AND THEN, IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT I GRADUATED TO 'W', SID. I NEED 'W'.



HE'S ON FELLOW, KID?

IT DOESN'T MATTER, SID... EITHER ONE. I NEED IT BAD, GIMME...



DEAR, EDDIE. BUT, IT'LL COST YOU TWO BUCKS A GOLF AND A FIVE FOR THE FIF.

IT HAD TAKEN ME LESS THAN **FOUR MONTHS** TO MOVE FROM PLASTIC 'AVE-T' TO POPPING 'V'. SO PROVIDED ME WITH 'THE FIT'... A 'SPICE' ON 'WIND', A LENGTH OF 'HARSH' 'HORN' TO DISTEND THE 'VIB', A 'S/DON' TO NEAR THE 'V' 'A', AND A CANO'STERNO. I WAS ON IT.

I NEED A FIX, AND HERE'S THE TWO BUCKS.

SORRY, EDDIE. MY OLD SUPPLIER GOT **HAGGLED** BY THE HEATS. A GOLT WILL COST YOU FEEB, NOW.



THE ALLOWANCE MY MOM AND DAD GAVE ME WASN'T ENOUGH TO **KEEP** MY NEEDS SATISFIED NOW. I NEEDED **MORE DOUGH**. I GOT A JOB AFTER SCHOOL...

S'MATTER, EDDIE? YOU LOOK SOOP!

IT'S NO FINK 'MR. CLEMENTS. I'LL **RIGHT** E.P. CAN YOU GIVE ME AN **ADVANCE** ON MY PAY, TODAY, MR. CLEMENTS?



TODAY'S ONLY **WEDNESDAY**, EDDIE! ALREADY, I'VE GIVEN YOU **HALF** YOUR **FEET**.

I NEED IT, MR. CLEMENTS! PLEASE!

YOU LOOK **FUNNY**, EDDIE. YOUR EYES...

GET OFF MY **BACK**, MR. CLEMENTS! ARE YOU GOING TO **GIVE** ME THE **DOUGH** OR AM I'T YOU?

YOU FINISH THE **WEEK**... YOU GET **PAID**. NO MORE **ADVANCES**.

WHY, YOU **DIRTY** LITTLE **SLAM** FROG?



I COULDN'T **HOLD** A JOB AFTER THAT. MOM AND DAD NEVER KNEW IT, BUT I STOPPED **GOING** TO SCHOOL. I USED TO GO **DOWNTOWN**, TO THE DEPARTMENT STORES... AND **SHOPLIFT**...

...AND THEN IT'S **PARK** THE STUFF I **SHIPPED**...

WHERE'D YOU GET IT?

DON'T **ASK** QUESTIONS JUST **CARE** WHAT IT'S **WORTH** TO YOU, AND **MAKE** IT **SWAPPY**.



I'D TAKE THE DOUGH I'D GOTTEN FROM THE STUFF TO SMILE, AND I'D TRACK DOWN SID.



WHAT'S HAPPENING, BOB?

I'M HOLDING! WANT TO SCOOBY?

YEAH? TWENTY-BUCKS WORTH?



THAT'S ONE FID!

ONE? WHY, YOU... SORRY, BOB, THAT'S THE PUCE! TAKE IT OR TRY A GOLD TURKEY!



I FIRED A 'GOLD TURKEY'... A HYDROPHAMAL... ONCE AND ONCE. I WAS SHORT OF CASH, ALL NIGHT LONG I PAVED THE FLOOR OF MY PAD AS THE TREMBLES BEGAN AND THE MADDER SWIFT DIED ME AND I COMBATED TO THE BATHROOM AND FORGOT BY THE OUT AND THE SHOWER BEAURED FROM ME AND MY NERVE-ENDS BURNED AND THE MONEY ON MY BACK BEGAN TO SCRATCH AND CLAP AND TEAL UNTIL...



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN I FINALLY SCORED WITH SID, I REEDED HIM...



LET ME PUSH THE STUFF FOR YOU, BOB. PAY ME OFF IN FIDES... A PERCENTAGE.

HOW YOU'RE TALKING, BOB. I'LL SPEAK TO SOME PEOPLE.

I'LL NEVER GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN. NEVER. I MADE UP MY MIND THAT ANYTIME THAT I'D ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH DOUGH FOR MY FIDES. I KNEW I COULD NEVER GO THROUGH A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL. I SWAPPED THE MONEY FOR A JOLT FROM MY OLD MAN'S WALLET WHILE HE SLEPT.



I RUSHED HOME, HOLDING, AND TORE UPSTAIRS TO MY PAD. BOB TRIED TO CORNER ME ON THE WAY, BUT I BRASHED HER SIDE.



EDDIE? YOUR FATHER...

LATER, MOM! LATER...

I SLAMMED INTO MY ROOM AND LOCKED THE DOOR AND PULLED OPEN MY DRAWER WHERE I KEPT MY FIT.



OH YES, WHERE IS IT? I SAID IT HERE I...

I LOOKED AROUND. DAD SAT ON THE BED BEHIND ME, STARING AT ME, HIS EYES BURNING. HIS MOUTH SET IN A TIGHT GRIM LINE...



THIS WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, EDDIE?

POP!

HE HELD THE FIT IN HIS HAND. HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS.



MY SON... TAKING DOPPE?

GIVE IT TO ME, POP! GIVE ME THAT FIT.

HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME. HIS MOUTH KEPT OPENING AND CLOSING AND WORDS POURED OUT, BUT I DIDN'T HEAR THEM. I KEPT LOOKING AT THE FIT WHILE MY THROAT GREW DRIER AND DRIER AND MY STOMACH STARTED TO GURGLE AND HEAVE AND THE MONKEY CAME OUT OF FREED'S HAIR...



WHAT DID WE EVER DO? WE SAKE YU EVERYTHING, WE TRIED! WE SACRIFICED! WHY, EDDIE? WHY?

CAN IT, POP! GIMME THE FIT FOR GOD'S SAKE!

...AND THE PAIN BEGAN. THE MONKEY STARTED SCREAMING AND GLAWING AND I STARTED GETTING SICK AND DIZZY AND THE TREMBLES CAME OVER ME...



NO, EDDIE. YOU'RE THROUGH WITH THE STUFF. I'M GOING TO TURN YOU OVER TO THE POLICE FOR A DURE.

NO! NO, POP! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!

POP STARTED TO TO GET UP, I FELT ALL WILD AND CRAZY AND DESPERATE INSIDE, AND THAT MAD-DENIED MONKEY KEPT SCREAMING AND GLAWING.



IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, EDDIE. THEY'LL GET YOU OFF IT. THEY'LL...

GIMME THAT FIT, POP!

SUDDENLY I SAW MYSELF GOING THROUGH A WINDMILL AGAIN AND EVERYTHING WENT WHITE-HOT BEFORE MY EYES. I GRABBED ON AN END-TABLE LAMP AND BROUGHT IT DOWN ON POP'S HEAD...



POP WENT SPRAWLING AND I GRABBED THE FIT AND DASHED OUT OF THE BEDROOM. MOM SCREAMED AFTER ME.



EDDIE! EDDIE, COME BACK!

THAT WAS YESTERDAY. NOW, I LIE SPRAWLED ON THE SWEAT-BOARDED BED OF A DIMAL CHEAP HOTEL ROOM WITH MY SAITS LONG EMPTY, TREMBLING AND SHIVERING, WAITING FOR SID...



OH, GOD... GOD... I'VE GOT TO HAVE A FIX! WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S SID?

THE SINK IN MY ROOM IS STAINED BILIOUS WITH MY HEAVINGS AND MY FIT LIES OPEN BESIDE ME AND I STARE AT EMPTY SOUND OUTSIDE MY DOOR. AND THEN IT COMES. THE HEAVY BLOOD...



SID? THANK GOD?

I LEAP FROM MY BED, GRIPPING WITH PERSPIRATION, THE GUN WITH THE COOL. THE PUFFY BRASSIERE IN HIS BLUE COAT WITH THE BRASS BUTTONS AND THE SLAMMING TIN SHIELD...

THE GUARD PUNCHED PAST ME, GRIMACED DOWN AT THE GUN, AND THEN LOOKED AT THE BLOOD AND UNHOOKED HIS CLIPS...



YOU EDDIE ANDERSON?

YEA... YOU GOT THE WRONG GUY, COPPER!



I GOT THE *FIX* GUY, EDDIE. SID SCARSON WAS POKED UP AFTER YOUR MOM PUNCHED US. HE TOLD US WHERE TO FIND YOU.

YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHING ON ME. THAT AIN'T MY FIT. I WAS HOLDIN' IT FOR SID. I DON'T FOLLOW THE CLUFF! I...



THAT'S YOUR FIT EDDIE? THE FIT YOU TOOK AWAY FROM YOUR FATHER WHEN YOU KILLED HIM.

KILLED... MY... FATHER...



YOU MUST'VE NEEDED A FIX *JEFFY* SID, EDDIE. YOU HIT HIM SO HARD, YOU SPLIT HIS HEAD OPEN WITH THAT LAMP. HE DIED INSTANTLY. LET'S GO...

NO, GOD... NOT ON, GOD! GET THIS MONEY OFF MY BACK! ON, GOD!



LAST LAUGH!

When the plane reached 70,000 feet, the warning buzzer sounded. Major Clagg jumped up, his arms and legs tingling with nervousness. With scrupulous care he pulled the high-altitude oxygen mask over his face, strapped the specially devised oxygen tank to his chest harness. His voice raised in a parody of a tune which he always sang before launching himself on one of these treacherous missions "How High I Am!" he warbled, pushing his feet into the bulky pressurized boots. Another buzzer sounded and Major Clagg felt a slight pain at the base of his skull. It was a normal symptom . . . he was aware of it each time he parachuted.

At 72,000 feet he clambered into his pressurized trousers and jacket, barely able to move because of the stiffness of the material encasing his body. As he zipped up the jump suit, a chuckle sounded in his chest and bubbled out his mouth. He remembered one of his best jumps, from a height of 45,000 feet. He certainly got a guffaw *that* time, by releasing a fireball of pingpong balls which showered down upon the true audience of military men far below. It was *that* exploit which gave him the nickname "Chuckles" . . . a name admirably suited to the most violent practical-joker in the entire parachute corps. Each leap after that, the spectators had been alerted to some hysterical peccadillo of the Major's. He always got a laugh in his leaps, Clagg assured himself with a smug.

The red bulb flashed: 75,000 feet. The Major pulled the pressurized gloves over his

hands, after making certain that the check-valve on his heated inner vest and underdrawers was working perfectly. He moved toward the jump door, poking at the anti-blackout hose to assure himself that it was firmly attached to the intake socket in his plexiglass helmet. Then, with a sly smile, he opened his jump kit and pulled out a huge cloth doll almost five feet tall. This would be his crowning gag. Clagg thought to himself with glee . . . on his greatest jump he would release the doll and let it plummet downwards toward the nervous spectators. From a height of 77,500 feet the big floppy doll would drop with incredible speed . . . and the men gathered below would think it was Clagg, himself! What a laugh he'd get with *that* stunt! The biggest practical joke of his career!

The jump door opened and Clagg massed himself. Then, with a chuckle that sounded weird inside his helmet, he released the doll and watched it drop down. A moment later, with a chuckle, Major Clagg stepped out into open air.

A hoarse sound brought him back to consciousness; the intake valve had pulled him out of his blackout. And the rest of the equipment was working perfectly, he realized, as he turned copy-curry in the thin, freezing air . . . the result of meticulous care.

He counted to ten, then reached for the ripcord. His finger tightened on the mechanism and he braced himself for the inevitable churning shock. Then he pulled hard. Nothing happened, except for a high, nervous giggle inside the Major's big plexiglass helmet! In all his frantic haste to perpetuate his big doll gag, "Chuckles" was the victim of a slight oversight: *that* hilarious joke was on HIM!

For Major Clagg had left his parachute in the plane!

The KIDNAPPER

DANIEL SAT MIRRORING UPON THE BED IN THEIR SOULIED TENEMENT APARTMENT BESIDE HIS PALE SMILING WIFE, TERESA, FINGERING THE SOFT PINK FLESH OF THIS MIRACLE OF LIFE THAT WAS THEIR NEWBORN SON. HE SAIED IN AMY UPON THE WRINKLED TEAR-DRENCHED FACE AND THE TINY PUDDY HANDS WITH THEIR TEN SHAPELESS FINGERS, AND HE MOODED AND WEPY A LITTLE IN TRANSEPLENNESS AND RELIEF, THE WAITING WAS FINALLY DYER, ALL THE FEARS AND APPREHENSIONS WERE ERASED, TERESA WAS WELL, AND THE BABY WAS WELL, AND OUTSIDE, BEYOND THE BROKEN BEDROOM WINDOW, THE SUN WAS SHINING...



DANIEL CLOSED THE TINY FIST AND STROKED HIS WIFE'S HAIR THAT NOW LAY STRANGELY UPON THE PILLOW, STILL GAMP WITH THE PERCUSSION OF HER PAIN.

TERESA LOOKED INTO DANIEL'S EYES AND HER PALID FACE GLOWED WITH THE STRANGE RADIANT BEAUTY OF ROTHERHOOD.



DANIEL TURNED AWAY SO THAT HIS WIFE WOULD NOT SEE HIS EYES FILLING WITH TEARS...



THE FREEDOM OF THE TENEMENT APARTMENT FELL SILENT. ONLY THE TRAFFIC NOISE BELOW, THE SCORCHING CHILDREN, THE CAR HORN, THE NOISY CALLS OF THE FREEDLERS, FILTERED UPWARD. THEN, THE NEW-BORN BABY BEGAN TO CRY...



DANIEL CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE BEDROOM AND LEANED BACK AGAINST IT, LISTENING TO THE BABY'S CRIES FADE, AND CONTENTED SUCKLING SOUNDS REPLACE THEM...



DANIEL'S SON WAS TWO MONTHS OLD WHEN IT HAPPENED. ~~TERESA, THE HAPPY PARENTS HAD RETURNED...~~ HE FINISHED IN THE SECOND-HAND CARRIAGE THEY'D BOUGHT TO CATCH THE FEW BRIGHT HOURS OF SUNLIGHT THAT FILTERED DOWN INTO THEIR SLUM-CORNER.



TERESA AND DANIEL HAD CLIMBED BACK UP THE LITTER-SCATTERED STAIRS TO WHERE THE NEW-BORN BABY SLEPT SOUNDLY IN THE CARRIAGE OUTSIDE. BUT WHEN THE HAPPY PARENTS HAD RETURNED...



TERESA TOOK ONLY THE BANG-AND-DOWN BLANKETS THAT KINDLY NEIGHBORS HAD GIVEN HER AND CLAWED ABOUT THE CARRIAGE, WIDE EYED... AS IF PERCHANCE, HER SON HAD THROWN AND NOW LAY MIDDEN IN SOME REMOTE CORNER.



THE OLD MAN CALLED FREDERICK SAT DOING UPON THE TENEMENT STOPS. HE LIFTED HIS HEAD SLEEPILY...



THE POLICE CAME, AND REPORTERS FROM THE PAPERS CAME, AND EVERYBODY ASKED EVERYBODY QUESTIONS. THE POLICE WROTE IN THEIR LITTLE BOOKS, AND THE REPORTERS WROTE IN THEIR LITTLE BOOKS, AND AFTER A WHILE THEY WENT AWAY AND DANIEL COMFORTED HIS SUFFERING WIFE...

DO NOT WORRY, TERESA. THEY WILL FIND OUR SON.

OH DANIEL... SON... DANIEL...



EVERY MORNING, DANIEL AND TERESA WOULD WALK TO THE POLICE STATION AND SIT ALL DAY UPON THE HARD WOODEN BENCHES AND WAIT FOR THE NEWS THAT THE POLICE HAD FOUND THEIR SON... BUT NO NEWS WOULD COME...

SCUFF, FOLKS? NOTHING YET?

BUT WHO WOULD WANT TO KIDNAP OUR CHILD?

WE ARE POOR! WE COULD NOT AFF TO GET HIM BACK! WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING!



AND EVERY NIGHT DANIEL AND TERESA WOULD LEAVE THE POLICE STATION AND WALK THEIR LOVELY WAY BACK TO THEIR TENEMENT. NO NEWS WOULD COME...

I WANT MY BABY. I WANT MY BABY. NO.

PLEASE, TERESA. YOU WILL MAKE YOURSELF SICK. DO NOT GIVE ANYMORE!



THE DAYS PASSED AND THE WEEKS PASSED AND STILL THE BABY WAS NOT FOUND. TERESA GAVE UP, STARING OUT OF THE STURDY WINDOW WITH GROUND-OUT EYES. DANIEL TRIED TO CHEER HER...

THE PEOPLE WHO TOOK HIM WILL REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE MADE A MISTAKE...

HE IS HOME FOR GOOD!



YOU WILL SEE, TERESA. THEY WILL COME ONE DAY, AND PUT HER BABY IN THE CARRIAGE, AND YOU WILL ASSE YOUR BABY AGAIN, YOU WILL SEE.

I WILL NEVER HAVE MY BABY AGAIN. HE IS GONE FOR GOOD...



THE LONG WEEKS CRACKED INTO MONTHS AND TERESA GREW WORSE EACH DAY. DULL, SILENT, SITTING HOUR BY HOUR, STARING AT THE EMPTY CARRIAGE. NO NEWS CAME FROM THE POLICE, AND ALL HOPE OF EVER FINDING THEIR BABY SEEMED GONE...

COME, TERESA. YOU MUST EAT SOMETHING!

I AM NOT HUNGRY!



AT NIGHT, LYING BESIDE HIS WIFE, WHO GREW THINNER AND PALER EACH DAY, DANIEL WOULD LISTEN TO HER LIVERN BREATHING AND HER QUIET WHISPERING...

MY BABY. I WANT MY BABY. OH, GOD, GIVE ME BACK MY BABY.



FINALLY, AFTER SIX LONG POUNDING MONTHS, DANIEL MADE UP HIS MIND. HE WOULD FIND THEIR BABY. HE WOULD SEARCH THE WHOLE CITY AND FIND HIM.



I'M GOING OUT, TERESA.

BRING ME MY BABY, DANIEL!

ALL OVER LOUIS, FROM DAWN TILL DUNE, DANIEL ROAMED THE CITY—SEARCHING, SEARCHING, PEERING INTO CARRIAGES, OPENING TINY INFANTS' HARBOR, STUDYING THEIR PAINFUL...



HEY YODD! GET JUMP FROM THESE YOU DIRTY TRAMP!

SORRY!

AND AT NIGHT, EXHAUSTED, HE WOULD RETURN TO HIS SHRIVELING WIFE WHOSE EYES HAD GROWN GLAZED AND WHOSE LIPS HAD SEALD IN A TIGHT LINE AND WHO SAT AND STROKED THE EMPTY CARRIAGE HOUR AFTER HOUR...



DID YOU BRING ME MY BABY, DANIEL?

NO, TERESA, BUT I WILL. YOU WILL WAIT.

A YEAR PASTED, DANIEL TOOK A MENIAL JOB AT NIGHT IN THE LARGEST SLAUGHTER-HOUSE IN THE CITY. DURING THE DAY, HE WOULD HE TROD THE CITY STREETS... LOOKING, LOOKING...



A LOVELY BABY, LADY.

KEEP YOUR HANES OFF HIM...

ONE DAY TERESA'S ROSE FROM HER WINDOW, SOMETHING THAT COULDN'T BE BELIEVED. SHE FLUNG CURTAINS ASIDE AND LOOK TO THE CURS... TO THE LINE OF RUSTY BENTED TRASH CANS...



MY BABY!

IN THE EVENING, WHEN DANIEL RETURNED FROM ANOTHER OF HIS FRUITLESS TOURS OF THE VAST CITY, HE FOUND TERESA CRADLING HER 'BABY' IN HER ARMS.



SEE, DANIEL? SEE? YOU WERE RIGHT! THEY BROUGHT MY BABY BACK TO ME!

THE DOCTOR SHOOK HIS HEAD, HE TOOK DANIEL ASIDE.



SHE MUST HAVE ANOTHER BABY, DANIEL. SHE MUST BE MADE TO FORGET THIS TRAGEDY. OTHERWISE... WELL, SHE WILL LOOSE HER MIND COMPLETELY.

WAT, DOCTORY? YOU SAID IT FORWISSELF! SHE CANNOT HAVE ANY MORE.

IT WAS A SOILED, TORN, DISCARDED PAID-DOLL... A CHILD'S GASP-OFF TOY THAT TERESA CRADLED LOVINGLY...

THE PEOPLE AT THE ADOPTION AGENCY SHOOK THEIR HEADS...

WE ARE *SORRY*, SIR, WE FIND THAT YOUR WIFE, IN HER PRESENT MENTAL CONDITION, IS NOT *FIT* TO ADOPT ONE OF OUR CHILDREN.

SAY IT IS BECAUSE *SORRY* SHE HAS NO CHILD THAT SHE IS *IN* THIS CONDITION. IF YOU COULD...



AND ONE NIGHT, AT HIS JOB, DANIEL LEARNED...

THERE ARE *OTHER* WAYS, DANIEL... THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL *SELL* YOU A BABY...

SELL ME A BABY? BUT WHERE DO THEY *GET* THEM?



WHO KNEW? AN UNFORTUNATE WOMAN MAKES A MISTAKE. PERHAPS THEY KIDNAP THEM. WHO KNOWS? BUT THESE PEOPLE *CHANGE* A GREAT DEAL!

HOW... HOW MUCH?

ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS...

HOW COULD I PAY *THAT* KIND OF MONEY? I AM PRACTICALLY *POORLESS*. I COULD NOT AFFORD IT!



IN THE MORNING, WHEN DANIEL WOULD RETURN FROM HIS JOB, THREE AND SIX, READY FOR A QUICK NAP BEFORE GOING OUT FOR HIS USUAL SEARCHING, HE WOULD FIND HIS WIFE CRADLING HER *TRAY*, SOFTLY SINGING LULLABIES...

"... SHAFKAM ANGELS GOD WILL SEND YOU... ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT!"

TERESA... TERESA...



DANIEL'S SEARCHING CARRIED HIM FAR FROM THE TENEMENTS, TO TREE-LINED STREETS WITH QUIET FRESHLY-PAINTED HOUSES. ONE DAY, AT HIS WIFE'S END, HE SPIED A *CARRIAGE* SITTING BEFORE ONE OF THESE HOUSES...



THE LITTLE BOY INSIDE THE CARRIAGE COOED UP AT HIM SOFTLY. TEARS FILLED DANIEL'S EYES.



DANIEL LOOKED AT THE GRINNING BABY AND THOUGHT OF HIS BELOVED TERESA... AND SUDDENLY HE GRABBED THE CHILD FROM THE CARRIAGE...



WHY NOT? THEY TAKEN HIM CHILD... HE'D TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S. DANIEL CRAWLED THE CHILD, RUNNING A SHRILL SCREAM SCOWED UP THE TREE-LINED STREET BEHIND HIM...



DOORS FLEW OPEN. THE MOTHER'S SCREAMS SUCKED PEOPLE FROM THEIR HOMES. ANGRY MEN, HORRIFIED WOMEN, YOUNG STRONG BOYS, DANIEL RAN



HEAVY FOOTSTEPS...HORSE SHOUTS OF ANGER... SCREAMS... THUNDER... SHOUTS... AND... IDENTIFIED... THIS WAY... THAT WAY... THEN SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF SURROUNDED



KICKS, STAMPS, PUNNELING... A STICK WHITELY SMITHED AND APPLIED, A FOOT, FISTS, KNEES... ANGRY, ANGRY... RAINED DOWN UPON DANIEL... AND HE LAY BACK DENSELESS UNTIL HIS LIFE EBBED AND FADED FROM THE SORROWLESS WORLD...



ANGRY HANDS REACHED OUT... GRABBING THE BABY CRIBBING... SHOCKED... LADDER... THE... DANIEL... BUT HIS FACE, HIS HAIR, BRUISING HIM TO THE GROUND...



AND THE MOTHER WHO COULD AFFORD THE PRICE CRADLED HER INFANT SON IN HER ARMS AND KISSED HIS CHEEKS, HIS HAIRS, THE PALM WITH THE STRANGE BIRTH-MARK THAT LOOKED LIKE A SLEET OF WRITING INK.



FALL GUY

THE POLICE OFFICERS ORDERED TO A STOP FAR BELOW IN THE STREET CANYON, ECHOING OFF THE DARK SILHET BUILDINGS. DANNY LEANED OVER THE PARAPET, GRINDING. IN A FEW MINUTES THEY'D BE COMING UP AFTER HIM, SHAKING HIM WITH THEIR SHINY HANDGUNS, AND CHASING HIM BACK TO THE HELL HOLE WHERE HE'D SPENT TEN MISERABLE YEARS... *BACK TO FUSION HELL, HE'D HAVE NONE OF THAT!* DANNY SHOOK HIS HEAD, THE FLASHING NEON LIGHT FROM THE BAR AND BILL SIGN THAT RAN VERTICALLY BY THE EDGE OF THE TOWERMENT REFLECTING ON HIS PERIPHERAL FACE. HE SCREAMED DOWN AT THE UNIFORMED FIGURES POURING FROM THE ROAD CARS...

NOT ME, COPPER! YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME BACK! NEVER!



DANNY CLIMBED ONTO THE PARAPET, SOMEONE IN THE STREET BELOW POINTED UP AT DANNY'S NEON ILLUMINATED FIGURE, OUTLINED AGAINST THE NIGHT SKY AND SHOUTED...



THERE HE IS! ON THE ROOF!

G'MON! LET'S GET HIM!

HE'S GOING TO JUMP!

DANNY LOOKED DOWN AT THE GATHERING SEA OF SPUTTERING FACES. THE SIGN, RUNNING AWAY DOWN THE BUILDING FACE, FLASHED ON AND OFF... FIRST BATHING HIM IN ITS RED-ORANGE LIGHT, THEN SPANNING HIM INTO BLACKNESS. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...



IT'S ALL OVER. THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR. NOTHING.

DANNY STOOD THERE, FEELING CRAZILY. HE THOUGHT OF HELEN, SMILING PAINTERLY IN THE CAR BELOW, WITH THE *XXIII* CASH DELIVERING HER ONE LOVELY FACE IN ONE JAWED CRIMSON SMILE...



... AND HE THOUGHT OF THE MONEY. *NINETY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS*. WAITING QUIETLY IN THAT SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX IN THE BANK WALLET... WAITING... WAITING.



WAITING FOR WHOM? DANNY SMILED. WHAT WAS THAT NAME? IF ONLY HE'D BEEN ABLE TO *REMEMBER* THAT NAME. THE NAME HE'D GIVEN THEM WHEN HE'D *RENTED* THE BOX... ALL THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED! DANNY LOOKED AROUND. FIGURES WERE SPILLING OUT ONTO THE ROOF NOW...



HOLD IT, JARDEN!
DON'T BE A FOOL, DANNY!
STAY AWAY, COPPERS!

DANNY MADE A MOVEMENT AS IF TO JUMP. THE POLICEMEN STOPPED COMING...



TAKE ONE MORE STEP FORWARD ME AND DOWN I GO, COPPERS.
GO AHEAD, SUCKIT JIMMY! YOU'LL SAVE THE STATE A LOT OF MONEY.

NINETY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS! IT WAS A LOT OF MONEY. DANNY STOOD THERE IN THE FLASHING LIGHT OF THE CAR'S REDD SIGN, REMEMBERING WHY HE'D *NEEDED* SO MUCH MONEY...



MARRY ME, DANNY! DON'T BE SILLY! YOU HAVEN'T A DIME! WHEN I MARRY, IT'LL BE TO SOMEBODY WITH PLENTY OF DASH!
I'LL GET DOWN, HELEN. HONEST!

DANNY REMEMBERED HOW HELEN HAD LAUGHED AT HIM.



YOU... GET DOWN? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! WHERE CAN A TWO-BIT HOTEL CLEAN GET THE KIND OF CASH I WANT? WHERE COULD YOU GET... SAY, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS?
I'LL GET IT, HELEN. YOU'LL SEE. THEN, WILL YOU MARRY ME?

... HOW SHE'D SMILED AT HIM, TAPPING HIS CHEEK.



ARE YOU MARRY ANYBODY WITH A HUNDRED GRAND ANYBODY EVEN YOU?
I LOVE YOU, HELEN. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, I'D DO ANYBODY FOR YOU.

DANNY TEXTURED ON THE PARADE, THE UNIFORMED FIGURED MOVING CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD HIM...

YOU'RE GOING BACK TO STAR, JANSEN. BLEASER THAT DARE WILL PUT YOU AWAY FOR A LONG TIME...

YOU'RE NOT PUTTING ME ANYWHERE, COPPIN. STAY BACK!



DANNY REMEMBERED THE DAY THE DAFFER-LOOKING GUY HAD COME INTO THE HOTEL WITH THE LITTLE BLACK BAG UNDER HIS ARM...

JUST SIGN HERE, MR. THAT'S ROOM NOW.

OH, I'D LIKE TO PUT THIS BAG INTO THE HOTEL SAFE...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D TAKEN THE BAG, AND HOW HE'D ALMOST DROPPED IT, AS THE DAFFER GUY ANNOUNCED...

CAREFUL WITH THAT, SON. THERE'S CLOSE TO ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS IN THAT BAG.

Y-ES-TER, SIR.



THE DAFFER GUY'D BEEN A DEALER IN DIAMONDS. HE'D COME TO TOWN TO MAKE SOME PURCHASES FOR CLIENTS. DANNY PUT THE BAG INTO THE HOTEL SAFE...

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS... MORE...

YOU'VE SAID THAT WILL BE SAFE THERE, DON'T YOU?



DANNY'D SMILED, THINKING OF HELEN, BEAUTIFUL, DEGREEABLE HELEN...

OH, YES, MR. PERFECTLY SAFE.

GOOD.



DANNY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D TAKEN THE BAG FROM THE SAFE AND RUSHED ACROSS TOWN TO A BANK...

I'D LIKE TO RENT A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX, PLEASE.

OF COURSE, MR. IF YOU'LL GIVE ME YOUR NAME...



THAT WAS IT. THAT WAS THE ONLY THING DANNY COULD NOT REMEMBER! NOW, HE'D GIVEN A FALSE NAME SO THAT WHEN AND IF HE WERE CAUGHT, THE MONEY WOULD BE SAFE... BAITING...

MY NAME IS... ER... ERAD SILBERT!

AND YOUR ADDRESS, MR. SILBERT?



THEN HE'D GO TO HELEN.

YOU SAID YOUR MARRIAGE WASN'T IF I GOT A HUNDRED GRAND. WELL, I'VE GOT IT.

WOW! YOU CAN DO IT, DANNY. I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR JOKES.



THIS IS NO JOKE, HELEN. I STOLE ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS AND I HID IT IN A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX UNDER A PHONY NAME.

AND YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT STORY?

YOU'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN THE COPS START LOOKING FOR ME. HELEN, JUST PROMISE ME ONE THING...

SURE, DANNY. ANYTHING.



PROMISE ME YOU'LL WAIT FOR ME. THEY'LL SAYON GO! WITH ME AND I'LL HAVE TO DO SOME TIME. PROMISE ME YOU'LL WAIT TILL I GET OUT.

SURE, DANNY. SURE?

DANNY REMEMBERED THE COPS COMING TO HIS ROOM.

...THEIR NECESSARY QUESTIONING...

WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE MONEY, JANSKY?

TELL US WHERE YOU HIDE IT, DANNY!

I DON'T GOT, COPPER!

GET YOUR GOAT, JANSKY!

THERE'S A LITTLE WRITER OF A HUNDRED GRAND MISSING FROM A HOTEL SAFE! WE'D LIKE TO TALK OVER WITH YOU.



HIS SENTENCING.

BECAUSE YOU HAVE PERSISTENTLY REFUSED TO DISCLOSE WHERE YOU HAVE HIDDEN THE MONEY YOU STOLE, I SENTENCE YOU TO THE MAXIMUM JAIL TERM ALLOWED BY LAW... 10 YEARS IN THE STATE PENITENTIARY...

...AND DANNY REMEMBERED HELEN'S LAST MOMENTS WITH HIM BEFORE HE WAS TAKEN AWAY.

TELL ME THE NAME, DANNY. THE NAME YOU USED WHEN YOU HIDDEN THE BOX.

DO YOU HEAR, YOU WAIT FOR ME. WITH TIME OFF FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR, I'LL BE OUT IN FEW YEARS. THEN IT'LL BE CLOVER FOR ME.



DANNY STOOD ON THE PARAPET.

LETTED COME DOWN, DANNY.

STAY BACK, COPPER. STAY BACK.



DANNY REMEMBERED THOSE MISERABLE YEARS IN JAIL, COUNTING THE ENDLESS DAYS AND SAYING THE NAME OVER AND OVER IN HIS MIND... THE NAME HE'D USED WHEN HE'D RENTED THE SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX... THE NAME HE'D FORGOTTEN...

BRAD GILBERT...
BRAD GILBERT...



FOR TEN YEARS, DANNY'D WAITED FOR THAT MOMENT. HELEN WAS OUT THERE... OUTSIDE THE GATE... WAITING FOR HIM...



DANNY: LET'S GO, DANNY! LET'S PICK UP THE DOWN AND HEAD FOR MEXICO!

AND THEN, THAT LONG-AWAITED DAY... THE GAT THE PRISON GATES SWUNG OPEN AND HE PASSED THROUGH THEM, A FREE MAN...

GOOD LUCK, DANNY!

THANKS, WARDEN



HE REMEMBERED THE DRIVE BACK TO TOWN... TO THE BANK...



YES, SIR? I RENTED A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX SEVERAL YEARS AGO. I PAID FOR IT IN ADVANCE. I'D LIKE TO HAVE IT OPENED...

HE REMEMBERED HOW THE BANK CLERK HAD HANDED HIM THE FORM...



OF COURSE, SIR. JUST SIGN YOUR NAME!

MR... MY NAME??

IT WAS CRAZY! EVERY DAY FOR TEN YEARS HE'D SAID THAT NAME TO HIMSELF, BUT THERE, IN THE BANK, WITH THE CLERK WAITING AND HELEN WAITING AND THE DOTTED LINE ON THE FORM WAITING, DANNY'D DRAWN A BLANK... COMPLETE LOSS OF MEMORY...



DANNY? SIGN THE NAME! THE NAME YOU USED!

I... OH, MY GOD! I CAN'T REMEMBER IT!

DANNY REMEMBERED HOW HELEN HAD PLEADED WITH HIM. THINK, DANNY! THINK! WHAT DID IT SOUND LIKE? WAS IT A COMMON NAME? A BALL-PLAYER, A...



SHUT UP, HELEN. THE CLERK.

JUST SIGN YOUR NAME, SIR. IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?

DANNY'D MADE A LAMP FALL ON...

I'LL BE BACK.
I FORGOT SOME
IMPORTANT
PAPERS THAT
I WANT TO PUT
IN...

OF COURSE,
DAD.



THEY'D WALKED FOR HOURS... HE
AND HELEN... SHE PRODDING HIM,
QUESTIONING, REWINDING, ALMOST
SCREAMING AT TIMES... AND HE,
RACKING HIS TORTURED BRAIN...

FOR GOD'S SAKE,
DANNY! HOW COULD
YOU FORGET ANY-
THING AS IMPORTANT
AS THAT? WAS IT
SMITH, JONES,
DANIELS?
THINK!

NO! NO!
LAY OFF
ME, WILL
YOU!



THEY'D ENDED UP TIGHT UNDER
THE BAR-B-QUE GRILL SIGN...

I'M HUNGRY!

LET'S GO
IN HERE.



THEY'D SIT IN THE BAR AND HELEN'D TUNED...

TEN YEARS I'VE WASTED...
WAITING FOR A BOMB CREEP...
TO FORGET THE NAME HE
USED WHEN HE WAS ONE
HUNDRED DOLLAR!

FOR CREEP OUT
LOUD, HELEN.
HAVE SOME PITY
ON ME. I'M BORED.



DANNY REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D SCREAMED...

HAVE PITY ON POOR? WHAT ABOUT ME??
WHAT ABOUT ALL THE CHANCES I PASSED
UP... WAITING FOR YOU... WAITING FOR YOU
TO GET OUT SO I COULD SET MY HANDS
ON THAT BOMB?? I NEVER GAVE A
HOOF ABOUT YOU. IT WAS THE
BOMB... THE BOMB...

HELEN.



LOOK AT ME! I'M ALMOST
FORTY! WHAT CHANCE
HAVE I GOT TO FIND
ANOTHER BACKBET YOU
WERE IT? AND NOW YOU
PULL A ROTTEN TRICK
LIKE THIS! THINK OF
THAT NAME, DANNY.
THINK!

SHUT
UP,
HELEN!

I WON'T SHUT UP!
MAKE ME! MAKE
ME SHUT UP,
YOU DAMN
CREEP!

I SAID,
SHUT UP,
HELEN!



AND DANNY REMEMBERED PLODDING UP
THE DELICIOUS STEAK MEAT.

MAKE ME, YOU LAMB-
BRANCHED IDIOT...
YOU... YOU...
DANNY!



DANNY GIBBLED ON THE PARAPET AS HE REMEMBERED SLASHING OUT AT HELEN... SLICING ACROSS HER JAWLINE MOUTH... AND THE BLOOD SPURTING, AS THE SAW-TOOTHED KNIFE CUT DEEP...

STAND BACK, COPPER!

THEY'RE DEAD, DANNY! SHE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A NAME BEFORE SHE DIED! WHAT NAME?



THE LIGHT FROM THE FLASHING RED-ORANGE COLORED DANNY'S FACE INTO A SIZING MASS...

THERE'S A HUNDRED GRAND IN A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX, COPPER. I HIDE IT UNDER A PSEUDO NAME, AND I FORGOT THE NAME OF THE HEART. I FORGOT IT!

BETTER COME DOWN, DANNY!



DANNY SCREAMED...

NOT ME, COPPER! I WANT TO GO! GOT NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR, NO NAME, NO HOME... NO MORE...



DANNY LEAPED, HIS SCREAM BOOMED DOWN INTO THE STREET CANYON... HE SMASHED AGAINST THE SIGN, CLUTTERING AT THE NEON LETTERS, RIPPING THEM AWAY AS HE PLUNGED...



NEON TUBES EXPLODED - HISSED, SPLINTERED AS HE FELL AGAINST THEM... DOWN... DOWN...



...AND JUST BEFORE HIS NIGHT LEFT HIM AND HIS LIFE SLIPPED AWAY AS HE LAY CRUSHED AND BROKEN ON THE SIDEWALK BELOW THE SIGN, DANNY LOOKED UP AND SAW THE WORK HIS FALLING BODY HAD DONE...



THEIR, OUTLINED IN FLASHING ORANGE AGAINST THE BLACK NIGHT, WAS THE NAME DANNY'D FORGOTTEN.

THE END...